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THE FLUSH OF SUMMER.

LAST evening the nightingales were in full song for the first time this season—a soft misty evening, with sweet flower-odours floating in the balmy twilight, and loading the atmosphere with perfume, until it suffused human sensation with dreamy delight in the still warm June gloaming. 'The late sweet air' had been full of the pure liquid song of England's sweetest warbler, and during the short serene night, the sustained length of rapturous melody and clear flexibility of voice, the depth and richness of its flute-like notes, has been heard with little intermission, holding the ear entranced in almost breathless listening, as little by little the shy brown birds have answered each other from the young fir plantations in the coppices, to those hidden in the garden shrubberies. The linked sweetness of plaintive harmony is full of love and joyance as one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*, or tender and changeful as a Beethoven symphony.

All the short June night I have heard at intervals these full-throated songsters, as also in the earliest dawning, when the stars begin to fade in the purple vault of heaven, which grows paler every minute, and

The Morn,

Waked by the circling hours, with rosy hand
Unbarred the gates of Light.

My blood is on fire with the glory and beauty of the morning, when the flush of summer gladness is over all the earth. I cannot rest in my room; a wild longing comes over me to steal away from the house in the ambient dawning and float down the river—that I can see shimmering not far off—in the swiftly coming light.

For the first time in my life I am staying with a friend in an old country-house, situated on the banks of the Avon, and surely Will Shakespeare never saw a quainter, fairer dwelling-house or a more glorious morning to inspire his genius. The household keeps late hours both night and morning, though buried in the heart of the Mid-

lands; so, scribbling a note to leave on the hall table, and having *carte blanche* to amuse myself as I please for the few days of my holiday from the rush and tear of town-life, I slip down-stairs in the semi-darkness of the closed house, unbar the door, and am standing on the threshold outside. My eyes are dazzled by the sudden flood of sunshine pouring over the dewy garden, that with its first warm rays brings out all the luscious perfume of the wealth of roses, pinks, and faint sweet-scented white hawthorn. As I stand gazing in silent admiration at the fair scene before me, the clock in the hall strikes four. The rays of the sun gleam through the fresh green leafage of the young lindens and kiss them into fluttering gold, and turn the meadow-grass into a sea of waving blossoms. I cross the closely clipped lawn and go down the winding path, through the shrubbery, under huge trees of drooping laburnum and snowy guelder-roses, the pale-green blossoms of the glossy leaved daphnes adding to the wealth of subtle scents that the fresh morning breeze renders so intoxicating. Through a lane with sweet-brier hedges for fifty yards or so, and before me flows the river, on which float a small boat and a couple of canoes in the little sandy pebbly cove, where the bright rippling wavelets lap in soft tidal splashes up to the grassy edge of the lane. Unfastening one of the canoes, I get in and paddle slowly up stream. The birds are revelling in the sunshine, and make a perfect chorus of sweet sounds; numberless larks rise high in the clear blue ether, and sing with wild delirious joy a flood of exhilarating music.

A light breeze springs up, rippling the surface of the green limpid river, and waving the reeds and sedges along the banks, between whose stems trail the myosotis, gazing with forget-me-not eyes up to the bluer sky, that seems clearer and bluer than later in the day. Now I glide along under the ancient pollard willows, with their rough hollow trunks and drooping rain of leaves; among the gnarled and twisted roots the sleek brown water-rats slink suspiciously, or splash into the deep mud-holes. Sometimes I pause beneath the

sweeping boughs of a giant chestnut, still crowned with cones of waxy blooms, or stop to inhale the heavy penetrating scent of the limes, in whose honey-laden flowers hang thousands of honey-laden bees, whose humming makes 'a slumbrous sound that brings the feelings of a dream.'

It is a new and delightful sensation to me to be on the river so early in the day, when the flush and glow and sparkle of the early morning are in their prime, and full of a wealth of hitherto unknown beauties. I can do little but gaze and wonder and enjoy. Surely it was on such a morn that Adam and Eve had the first glimpse of their earthly paradise, and wandered in childlike innocence and faith through the freshly budded woods and flowery hedgerows,

Where the green grew golden above,
And the flag-flowers lighted with laughter,
And the meadow-sweet shook with love.

I hardly realised how long I had been paddling slowly mid-stream, or pausing to take in all the sweet homely sights and sounds of the country, that for the last hour or so had come, mellowed by distance, to my awakened ears: the whistle of the labourer; the sharp bark of a dog and stamping of horses, with the clink of pail or whetting of scythes; the far-off clap of a swing-gate backwards and forwards. Slowly and noiselessly a barge glided past me; a rough-looking man bade me a surly 'Lookout, maister!' as the cord trailed over the canoe and barely escaped capsizing my frail bark. Sitting on the barge was a gypsy-faced, black-eyed woman, with a ragged hat tilted over her eyes; by her side stood a chattering, laughing, blue-eyed child, over whose lint-white locks four summers had barely passed. She was feeding with ravenous appetite on bits of bread and bacon, cut from a big hunch in the woman's hand, the imperious baby voice calling impatiently for 'More, more!' after every mouthful. A shock-headed boy of ten or twelve lay extended half over the barge, beating the water with a stick.

Whether it was the sight of the little one's keen enjoyment of the homely fare, I know not, but suddenly I became conscious I had been fasting some hours in the morning air, and wondered if I could obtain food anywhere. A few yards farther, turning a bend of the river under a huge cluster of elder bushes, I saw on the bank a dozen or two of cottages, an old church on the hill, and within twenty yards of the bank, a rambling whitewashed inn, called the *Three Pigeons*. It might quite as correctly have been called the Hundred Pigeons, from the great number of those birds that were perched upon the quaint, red-tiled, gable-ended roof, and nestling upon every coign of vantage under the broad eaves, sunning their glossy purple-and-green plumage; the pure white fantails and strutting pouters congregating round the stone trough of the ivy-covered pump, in the sunny strip of courtyard. Here I had a big meal of homely country dainties—ham and fresh eggs, sweet home-made bread and butter, and best of all, a jug of warm new milk. I was very glad of some food, for I had been fasting fourteen hours,

and the fresh breeze on the river for five hours had given me a tremendous appetite.

Afterwards, I sauntered through the hamlet to the queer little one-sided stone church. The door was locked; but I looked in through the narrow grated windows of muddy-green glass. It seemed a bare barn of a place, with high narrow pews and dark and gloomy interior, probably from the sharp contrast outside of the brilliant midsummer sunshine pouring down so joyously upon the moss-grown headstones and grassy mounds of the primitive 'God's-acre,' where a few sheep were contentedly nibbling the short thymy herbage. All round could be seen a fair sweep of 'green undulating slopes and meadows and leafy woods, the gleaming river winding in and out till it became a tiny silver streak, lost in the misty blue distance.

Down below was the village, a veritable 'Sleepy Hollow,' for any sign of life to be heard or seen. Only behind one cottage a stout red-faced woman was hanging clothes, on lines stretched between rows of beehives; and inside another was heard the drowsy hum of young voices counting to some rhyme, mingled with the jingle of bobbins on the lace pillow. In the distance sounded the dreamy monotonous cry of the cuckoo; from the woods and hills echoed the soft 'wandering voice,' till the wooing summer breeze seemed full of the murmurings.

Gaining the river once more, I paddled slowly along, idly watching the darting swifts and skimming swallows, and drinking in the balmy air, now full of the scent of new-mown hay. About half a mile from the village, a slip of a girl, with a faded blue frock and bright pink sun-bonnet, sat upon the bank amongst the reeds. Her lap was full of cuckoo-flowers, her brown hands as well, the bare brown feet dipping into the water. She might have sat for Mrs Browning's 'Little Ellie,' with her wide blue-eyed smiling face gazing wonderingly at the paddle flashing in the water, and wishing for 'her lover on a red-roan steed.' But no such thought had yet come to the open childish face; the sweet shrill voice was singing 'Shall we gather at the river,' when a woman suddenly called loudly from the next field: 'Sally, Sally, come here!' The singing stopped abruptly; and with a sly grin at me, 'Sally' slipped herself down among the reeds and rushes till she was hidden from view, and with the cuckoo-flowers gathered up in her blue frock, crept along the shelving bank till she was behind a clump of osiers.

On and on in the still hot sunshine of mid-summer. A soft misty haze suffuses the far-reaching hills of which I catch glimpses in the bends of the river, now one side, now the other. Everywhere is the scent of hawthorn and freshly cut grass; past waving fields of young grain, luscious patches of beams in full blossom, glorious sweeps of red clover, coppices of hazel and birch; an old, pleasant-looking farmhouse, nestled under half-a-dozen magnificent beech-trees, on one bank; three or four low crouching thatched cottages on the other; and from up a narrow back-water, come the sound of a rushing mill-wheel and splash of water over the sluice. Somewhere over the fields I can see the brown spire of another church; here a sheltered nook, where

the blue kingfisher yet lingers; there, a shallow, where cows stand knee-deep in water. Then a dense wood comes in sight; a little nearer, and I find a small stream under the thick tangle of undergrowth, where I can run the canoe, that rustles the broad leaves of the hartstongue ferns, growing in rich luxuriance, amongst the deep soft moss and water-weeds.

After the clear brilliant sunshine on the river, under these trees it looks pleasantly cool and dim. The grass is soft and green. I fetch my rug from the canoe, spread it at the foot of a giant beech, a monarch of the woods, and stretch myself, with a delicious sense of rest and ease. Overhead, the young leaves are whispering songs of blue skies and golden weather; the coo of the stockdoves and caw of rooks sound far above me. I close my eyes and dream. Barely sixty hours ago I was in the midst of the tide and rush of business life in London, with the unceasing roar of city traffic in my ears. Now I am out of reach of all sounds save those of Nature—the soft slumberous rustle of

Leaves around, a little stirred,
A sense of music which was rather felt than heard.

With this mingled the flow of water, or the sibilous noise of the yellow willow-wren, that haunts the tops of the beech, singing its queer grasshopper note. Full twenty years have passed since I, a boy of fifteen, last heard that note; but the rapid association of ideas bridges over time quickly as a flash of electricity from London to Paris, and recalls incidents in those long-forgotten years, with all the clinging memories of youth, when our future life seemed one long vista of fulfilled successes. Ah! how refreshing is this dreamy rest of mind and body, this 'silence and stillness, the sweetest of human joys' under the cool dim shadowy trees. Like as of old to our forefathers was 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' so are the 'green pastures and still waters' to those amongst us that are compelled to bear the burden and heat of the day in the close warehouses and offices of the city.

Lulled by the cooing doves and tired with the long hours in the open air, I must have insensibly passed from waking dreams to those of sleep. I woke, rested and refreshed, to find it was nearly six o'clock. In a few minutes I was again in the canoe and paddling back at a rapid pace towards Longmead; but I had come much farther than I imagined; and it was past eight before I reached the sandy cove whence I started in the dewy morning sunshine. The sweet-brier hedge exhaled its ravishing perfume as I lingered with loitering steps towards the shrubby path, loth to break the spell of the long peaceful midsummer day. As I stood under the laburnums watching the golden splendour of the setting sun over the distant hills, a liquid note or two greeted my ears, a pause, a *roulade* of joyous music followed; then the long-sustained, mellow, tender, half-melancholy, flute-like song breaks forth; clear, keen, and high it mounts like the note of a violin in a master's hand, as full of bewildering beauty as on the previous night. As one after another of the shy brown warblers takes up the rich cadences, I listen with rapt ears, unconscious of the footsteps approaching, till John Fane lays his hand on my shoulders and says quietly: 'I began to think

you were lost or drowned. Come in now. You must be famishing.' With a laugh I turned and followed him. I did not lie and listen to the nightingales that night; I slept soundly for ten hours without waking.

THIS MORTAL COIL.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—REHEARSAL.

MEANWHILE, when the house was all finished and decorated throughout, Hugh turned his thoughts once more, on fame intent, to his great forthcoming volume of verses. Since he married Winifred, he had published little, eschewing journalism and such small tasks as unworthy the dignity of accomplished squiredom; but he had been working hard from time to time at polishing and repolishing his *magnum opus*, *A Life's Philosophy*—a lengthy poem in a metre of his own, more or less novel, and embodying a number of moral reflections, more or less trite, on the youth, adolescence, maturity, and decrepitude of the human subject. It exactly suited Mr Matthew Arnold's well-known definition, being, in fact, an exhaustive criticism of life, as Hugh Massinger himself had found it. He meant to print it in time for the autumn book-season. It was the great stake of his life, and he was confident of success. He had worked it up with ceaseless toil to what seemed to himself the highest possible pitch of artistic handicraft; and he rolled his own sonorous rhymes over and over again with infinite satisfaction upon his literary palate, pronouncing them all, on impartial survey, of most excellent flavour. Nothing in life, indeed, can be more deceptive than the poetaster's confidence in his own productions. He mistakes familiarity for smoothness of ring, and a practised hand for genius and originality. It is his fate always to find his own lines absolutely perfect; in which cheerful personal creed the rest of the world mostly fails altogether to agree with him.

In such a self-congratulatory and hopeful mood, Hugh sat one morning in the new drawing-room, holding a quire of closely written sermon-paper stitched together in his hand, and gazing affectionately with parental pride at his last-born stanzas. Winifred had only returned yesterday from a shopping expedition up to town, and was idling away a day in rest and repair after her unwonted exertion among the crowded bazaars of the modern Bagdad. So Hugh leaned back in his chair at his ease, and, seized with the sudden thirst for an audience, began to pour forth in her ear in his rotund manner the final finished introductory prelude to his *Life's Philosophy*. His wife, propped up on the pillows of the sofa and lolling carelessly, listened and smiled as he read and read, with somewhat sceptical though polite indifference.

'Let me see, where had I got to?' Hugh went on once, after one of her frequent and trying critical interruptions. 'You put me out so, Winnie, with your constant fault-finding! I can't recollect how far I'd read to you.'

"Begotten unawares:" now go ahead,' Winifred answered carelessly—as carelessly as though it was some other fellow's poems he had been pouring forth to her.

"Or bastard offspring of unconscious nature, Begotten unawares," Hugh repeated pompously, looking back with a loving eye at his much-admired manuscript. 'Now listen to the next good bit, Winifred; it's really impressive.—

XXXII.

When chaos slowly set to sun or planet,
And molten masses hardened into earth;
When primal force wrought out on sea and granite
The wondrous miracle of living birth;
Did mightier Mind, in clouds of glory hidden,
Breathe power through its limbs to feel and know,
Or sentence spring, spontaneous and unbidden,
With feeble steps and slow?

XXXIII.

Are sense and thought but parasites of being?
Did Nature mould our limbs to act and move,
But some strange chance endow our eyes with seeing,
Our nerves with feeling, and our hearts with love?
Since all alone we stand, alone discerning
Sorrow from joy, self from the things without;
While blind fate tramples on the spirit's yearning,
And floods our souls with doubt.

XXXIV.

This very tree, whose life is our life's sister,
We know not if the ichor in her veins
Thrill with fierce joy when April dews have kissed her,
Or shrink in anguish from October rains;
We search the mighty world above and under,
Yet nowhere find the soul we fain would find;
Speech in the hollow rumbling of the thunder,
Words in the whispering wind.

XXXV.

We yearn for brotherhood with lake and mountain,
Our conscious soul seeks conscious sympathy;
Nymphs in the coppice, Naiads in the fountain,
Gods on the craggy height or roaring sea.
We find but soulless sequences of matter;
Fact linked to fact in adamantine rods;
Eternal bounds of former sense and latter;
Dead laws for living gods.

'There, Winifred, what do you say to that now? Isn't that calculated to take the wind out of some of these pretentious fellows' sails? What do you think of it?'

'Think?' Winifred answered, pursing up her lips into an expression of the utmost professional connoisseurship. 'I think "granite" doesn't rhyme in the English language with "planet;" and I consider "sentence" is a horribly prosaic word of its sort to introduce into serious poetry.—What's that stuff about liquor too? "We know not if the liquor in her something." I don't like "liquor." It's not good: bar-room English, only fit for a public-house production.'

'I didn't say "liquor,"' Hugh cried indignantly. 'I said "ichor," which of course is a very different matter. "We know not if the ichor in her veins." Ichor's the blood of the gods in Homer. That's the worst of reading these things to women: classical allusion's an utter blank to them.—If you've got nothing better than that to object, have the kindness, please, not to interrupt me.'

Winifred closed her lips with a sharp snap;

while Hugh went on, nothing abashed, with the same sonorous metre-marked mouthing:

XXXVI.

'They care not any whit for pain or pleasure
That seem to men the sun and end of all.
Dumb force and barren number are their measure:
What can be, shall be, though the great world fall.
They take no heed of man, or man's deserving,
Reck not what happy lives they make, or mar,
Work out their fatal will, unswerved, unswerving,
And know not that they are.'

'Now, what do you say to that, Winifred? Isn't it just hunky?'

'I don't like interrupting,' Winifred snapped out savagely. 'You told me not to interrupt, except for a good and sufficient reason.'

'Well, don't be nasty,' Hugh put in, half smiling. 'This is business, you know—a matter of public appreciation—and I want your criticism: it all means money. Criticism from anybody, no matter whom, is always worth at least something.'

'Oh, thank you, so much. That is polite of you. Then if you want criticism, no matter from whom, I should say I fail to perceive, myself, the precise difference you mean to suggest between the two adjectives "unswerved" and "unswerving." To the untutored intelligence of a mere woman, to whom classical allusion's an utter blank, they seem to say exactly the same thing twice over.'

'No, no,' Hugh answered, getting warm in self-defence. "'Unswerved" is passive; "unswerving" is active, or at least middle: the one means that they swerve themselves; the other, that somebody or something else swerves them.'

'You do violence to the genius of the English language,' Winifred remarked curtly. 'I may not be acquainted with Latin and Greek, but I talk at least my mother-tongue. Are you going to print nothing but this great, long, dreary incomprehensible *Life's Philosophy* in your new volume?'

'I shall make it up mainly with that,' Hugh answered, crest-fallen, at so obvious a failure favourably to impress the domestic critic. 'But I shall also eke out the title-piece with a lot of stray occasional verses—the *Funeral Ode for Gambetta*, for example, and plenty of others that I haven't read you. Some of them seem to me tolerably successful.' He was growing modest before the face of her unflinching criticism.

'Read me *Gambetta*,' Winifred said with quiet imperiousness. 'I'll see if I like that any better than all this foolish maundering Philosophy.'

Hugh turned over his papers for the piece 'by request,' and after some searching among quires and sheets, came at last upon a clean-written copy of his immortal threnody. He began reading out the lugubrious lines in a sufficiently grandiose and sepulchral voice. Winifred listened with careless attention, as to a matter little worthy her sublime consideration. Hugh cleared his throat and rang out magniloquently:

'She sits once more upon her ancient throne,
The fair Republic of our steadfast vows:
A Phrygian bonnet binds her queenly brows;
Athwart her neck her knotted hair is blown.
A hundred cities nestle in her lap,
Girt round their stately locks with mural crowns:
The folds of her imperial robe enwrap
A thousand lesser towns.'

"Mural crowns" is good," Winifred murmured satirically: "it reminds one so vividly of the stone statues in the Place de la Concorde."

Hugh took no notice of her intercalary criticism. He went on with ten or twelve stanzas more of the same bombastic, would-be sublime character, and wound up at last in thunderous tones with a prophetic outburst as to the imagined career of some future Gambetta—himself possibly:

'He still shall guide us toward the distant goal;
Calm with unerring tact our weak alarms;
Train all our youth in skill of manly arms,
And knit our sires in unity of soul:
Till bursting iron bars and gates of brass
Our own Republic stretch her arm against
To raise the weeping daughters of Alsace,
And lead thee home, Lorraine.

"Well, what do you think of *that*, Winnie?" he asked at last triumphantly, with the air of a man who has trotted out his best war-horse for public inspection and has no fear of the effect he is producing.

"Think?" Winifred answered. "Why, I think, Hugh, that if Swinburne had never written his Ode to Victor Hugo, you would never have written that Funeral March for your precious Gambetta."

Hugh bit his lip in bitter silence. The criticism was many times worse than harsh: it was true; and he knew it. But a truthful critic is the most galling of all things.

"Well, surely, Winifred," he cried at last, after a long pause, "you think those other lines good, don't you?"

And when like some fierce whirlwind through the land
The wrathful Teuton swept, he only dared
To hope and act when every heart and hand,
But his alone, despaired.

"My dear Hugh," Winifred answered candidly, "don't you see in your own heart that all this sort of thing may be very well in its own way, but it isn't original—it isn't inspiration; it isn't the true sacred fire: it's only an echo. Echoes do admirably for the young beginner; but in a man of your age—for you're getting on now—we expect something native and idiosyncratic.—I think Mr Hatherley called it idiosyncratic.—You know Mr Hatherley said to me once you would never be a poet. You have too good a memory. "Whenever Massinger sits down at his desk to write about anything," he said in his quiet way, "he remembers such a perfect flood of excellent things other people have written about the same subject, that he's absolutely incapable of originality." And the more I see of your poetry, dear, the more do I see that Mr Hatherley was right—right beyond question. You're clever enough, but you know you're not original."

Hugh answered her never a single word. To such a knock-down blow as that, any answer at all is clearly impossible. He only muttered something very low to himself about casting one's pearls before some creature inaudible.

Presently, Winifred spoke again. "Let's go out," she said, rising from the sofa, "and sit by the sea on the roots of the poplar."

At the word, Hugh flung down the manuscript in a heap on the ground with a stronger expression than Winifred had ever before heard fall from his lips. "I hate the poplar!" he said angrily;

"I detest the poplar! I won't have the poplar! Nothing on earth will induce me to sit by the poplar!"

"How cross you are!" Winifred cried with a frown. "You jump at me as if you'd snap my head off! And all just because I didn't like your verses.—Very well then; I'll go and sit there alone.—I can amuse myself, fortunately, without your help. I've got Mr Hatherley's clever article in this month's *Contemporary*."

That evening, as they sat together silently in the drawing-room, Winifred engaged in the feminine amusement of casting admiring glances at her own walls, and Hugh poring deep over a serious-looking book, Winifred glanced over at him suddenly with a sigh, and murmured half aloud: "After all, really I don't think much of it."

"Much of what?" Hugh asked, still bending over the book he was anxiously consulting.

"Why, of that gourd I brought home from town yesterday. You know Mrs Walpole's got a gourd in her drawing-room; and every time I went into the vicarage I said to myself: "Oh, how lovely it is! How exquisite! How foreign-looking! If only I had a gourd like that, now, I think life would be really endurable. It gives the last touch of art to the picture. Our new drawing-room would look just perfection with such a gourd as hers to finish the wall with." Well, I saw the exact counterpart of that very gourd the day before yesterday at a shop in Bond Street. I bought it, and brought it home with exceeding great joy. I thought I should then be quite happy. I hung it up on the wall to try, this morning. And sitting here all evening, looking at it with my head first on one side and then on the other, I've said to myself a thousand times over: "It doesn't look one bit like Mrs Walpole's. After all, I don't know that I'm so much happier, now I've got it, than I was before I had a gourd of my own at all to look at."

Hugh groaned. The unconscious allegory was far too obvious in its application not to sink into the very depths of his soul. He turned back to his book, and sighed inwardly to think for what a feeble, unsatisfactory shadow of a gourd he had sacrificed his own life—not to speak of Winifred's and Elsie's.

By-and-by Winifred rose and crossed the room. "What's that you're studying so intently?" she asked, with a suspicious glance at the book in his fingers.

Hugh hesitated, and seemed half inclined for a moment to shut the book with a bang and hide it away from her. Then he made up his mind with a fresh resolve to brazen it out. "Gordon's *Electricity and Magnetism*," he answered quietly, as unabashed as possible, holding the volume half-closed with his forefinger at the page he had just hunted up. "I'm—I'm interested at present to some extent in the subject of electricity. I'm thinking of getting it up a little."

Winifred took the book from his hand, wondering, with a masterful air of perfect authority. He yielded like a lamb. On immaterial questions it was his policy not to resist her. She turned to the page where his finger had rested and ran it down lightly with her quick eye. The key-words showed in some degree at what it was driving: "Franklin's Experiment"—"Means of Collection"

—'Theory of Lightning Rods'—'Ruhmkorff's Coils'—'Drawing down Electric Discharges from the Clouds.'—Why, what was all this? She turned round to him inquiringly. Hugh shuffled in an uneasy way in his chair. The husband who shuffles betrays his cause. 'We must put up conductors, Winnie,' he said hesitatingly, with a hot face, 'to protect those new gables at the east wing.—It's dangerous to leave the house so exposed. I'll order them down from London to-morrow.'

'Conductors! Fiddlesticks!' Winifred answered in a breath, with wifely promptitude. 'Lightning never hurt the house yet, and it's not going to begin hurting it now, just because an Immortal Poet with a fad for electricity has come to live and compose at Whitestrand. If anything, it ought to go the other way. Bards, you know, are exempt from thunderbolts. Didn't you read me the lines yourself, "God's lightnings spared, they said, Alone the holier head, Whose laurels screened it," or something to that effect? You're all right, you see. Poets can never get struck, I fancy.'

'But "Mr Hatherley said to me once you would never be a poet,"' Hugh repeated with a smile, exactly mimicking Winifred's querulous little voice and manner. 'As my own wife doesn't consider me a poet, Winifred, I shall venture to do as I like myself about my private property.'

Winifred took up a bedroom candle and lighted it quietly without a word. Then she went up to muse in her own bedroom over her new gourd and other disillusionments.

As soon as she was gone, Hugh rose from his chair and walked slowly into his own study. Gordon's *Electricity* was still in his hand, and his finger pointed to that incriminating passage. He sat down at the sloping desk and wrote a short note to a well-known firm of scientific instrument makers whose address he had copied a week before from the advertisement sheet of *Nature*.

WHITESTRAND HALL, ALMUNDHAM, SUFFOLK.

GENTLEMEN—Please forward me to the above address, at your earliest convenience, your most powerful form of Ruhmkorff Induction Coil, with secondary wires attached, for which cheque will be sent in full on receipt of invoice or retail price-list.—Faithfully yours, HUGH MASSINGER.

As he rose from the desk, he glanced half involuntarily out of the study window. It pointed south. The moon was shining full on the water. That hateful poplar stared him straight in the face, as tall and gaunt and immovable as ever. On its roof, a woman in a white dress was standing, looking out over the angry sea, as Elsie had stood, for the twinkling of an eye, on that terrible evening when he lost her for ever. One second, the sight sent a shiver through his frame, then he laughed to himself, the next, for his groundless terror. How childish! How infantile! It was the gardener's wife, in her light print frock, looking out to sea for her boy's smack, overdue, no doubt—for Charlie was a fisherman.—But it was intolerable that he, the Squire of Whitestrand, should be subjected to such horrible turns as these.—He shook his fist angrily at the offend-

ing tree. 'You shall pay for it, my friend,' he muttered low but hoarse between his clenched teeth. 'You shan't have many more chances of frightening me!'

A VISIT TO 'LA CONCIERGERIE,' STATE PRISON OF PARIS.

In the early part of June last year, a friend and myself wandering in that portion of old Paris famous for its historical associations, stayed our steps before the gilded portals of the newly restored Palais de Justice, one of the most imposing monuments in that fairest of cities. It is superfluous to attempt to narrate all the purposes to which that building has been put since the period of its occupation by the kings of France up to the present time. The portion which more particularly demands our attention for the present is the 'Conciergerie,' the gloomy old Paris prison, and one of the most famous in the annals of France. The ancient prison of the royal palace, its name is derived from the *concierge* (keeper). Occupying the left wing of the Palais de Justice, running parallel with the Seine, it is one of the principal existing monuments of the Great Revolution. A permit bearing the signature of the prefect of police being necessary before admittance could be gained, our first care was to call at the Prefecture, where on presentation of our cards the required authorisation bearing our names was accorded us. Crossing the broad open courtyard of the police barracks, we retraced our steps to the Quai de l'Horloge, which runs parallel to the river Seine. On the north-east corner of the Tour de l'Horloge, near the Pont au Change, is fixed the oldest public clock in France, having been constructed in 1370 by Henry de Vie, a German clockmaker, and restored in 1852. It is flanked by two figures representing Justice and Piety.

A short walk along the bank of the river brought us to a sentry of the Garde Republicaine on duty before a heavily barred gate. The bell was rung; and presenting our authority to a gate-keeper, we were duly admitted within the precincts. We traversed a rectangular courtyard, and on turning to the right, noticed a pointed doorway secured by a heavily barred door, on the top of which, in stone letters, was the word 'Conciergerie.' We then handed our permit to a warder, and were admitted into the ancient guardroom of St Louis, still used as such by the guardians on duty. After scrutinising our ticket, he opened another barred gate; and descending some steps, we found ourselves in the famous state prison where the principal scenes of the revolutionary drama of 1789 to 1795 were enacted. In a large and lofty hall with Gothic pillars and groined ceiling, we awaited the official conductor who was to show us round.

On the right of the entrance two staircases lead to the Council Chamber on the one side, and to the director's apartments on the other. These two rooms facing the quay are respectively situated in two pointed turrets, called Tour de Castille and Tour de César. The rooms in the Tour de César were used as a prison for Prince Pierre Bonaparte in 1870, and in January 1883 for Prince Jerome Napoleon. The third turret is known as Tour d'Argent, formerly used as the king's treasury, and originally the apartments of

Queen Blanche, the mother of St Louis. The fourth, at the extreme end of the building, in olden days used as a torture chamber, is derisively called *La Tour de Bonbec*, because the prisoners' cries were often heard piercing the thick walls with agonising shrieks. Listeners used to exclaim, 'Il a bon bec,' alluding to the cries of the hapless and suffering victims.

Quitting the entrance hall, a second broad hall, dimly lighted, separated by a *grille* from the first, is entered.

It bears the historic name of the Rue de Paris, because during the Reign of Terror two hundred and fifty prisoners were huddled together in this passage. We were informed by the warder who showed us through—a man upwards of seventy years of age, and who has held nearly fifty years the post of keeper at the Conciergerie—that the late Emperor, when Prince Napoleon, after his unlucky manifesto, used here to take his daily exercise, no doubt pondering on the vicissitudes of his eventful life. To the left, the visitor looks down into the Salle St Louis, a large Gothic crypt, with groined ceiling, and supported upon stone pillars in the same style of architecture. At each angle of the hall are four immense open fireplaces, and a staircase, which formerly led to the Seine. This hall was formerly used as a refectory for the servants and others of the king's household. It was recently proposed to have cells placed in this hall; but as it was originally ten feet lower than the level of the quay, it was judged unsatisfactory from a sanitary point of view, and was abandoned.

After viewing this ancient hall, we passed into a small corridor, the walls being whitewashed and kept very clean. It is here that the prisoners' bread is stored. The officials say with a charmingly self-satisfied air: 'Here is made the best prison-bread in the world.' According to their opinion, 'Messieurs les prisonniers' are not badly treated in the Conciergerie. At the end of this corridor in which the bread is kept, an old iron gateway, now blocked up, is seen. This, we were told, was the old Conciergerie entrance. Through here, Marie-Antoinette went to the scaffold on the 16th of October 1793, in the dreaded *tombereau* vehicle, which called there daily for its human freight to feed the hungry guillotine.

To the right of this corridor is a small square room, the furniture composed of a rusty stove and some camp bedsteads. In this dark room was imprisoned the celebrated Marquis de Lavalette, condemned to death for joining the Emperor Napoleon on his return from Elba in 1815, but who, on the day before that fixed for his execution, in December of that year, escaped in his wife's clothes, leaving her hidden in his prison bed. Three Englishmen who aided him in his escape were subsequently sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Lavalette returned to Paris in 1820, and died in retirement ten years later. In an adjoining room, now used as a kitchen for one of the officers of the prison, Marshal Ney was confined, when he used to disturb the Marquis de Lavalette by playing the flute. On the 7th of December 1815, the gallant marshal was shot in the garden of the Luxembourg for joining the Emperor. When an attempt was made to blindfold him, he tore away the bandage and

indignantly exclaimed: 'Have you forgotten that for twenty-six years I have lived among bullets?' and laying his hand upon his heart, called out with a steady voice: 'Aim true. France for ever! Fire!' In this cell was also detained the famous poet, André Chénier.

Outside is a large square courtyard, in the middle of which stands a circular stone: this is the last vestige of the Montgomery Tower—finally demolished in 1789—where the unfortunate Count Montgomery, who accidentally, but mortally wounded Henry II. of France, was imprisoned after the fatal tournament.

In one corner of this courtyard stands a heavy stone trough, pompously called a fountain. In this basin, during the Revolution, the court ladies and aristocratic beauties were in the habit of washing their linen *en famille*. The courtyard at that time was nicknamed by the Republicans the Boulevard de Gand, an ironical allusion to the then fashionable promenade.

Many notable persons left the Conciergerie during that sanguinary period, among whom were the Duc d'Orleans, Madame Du Barry, Madame Roland, Danton, and others, without mentioning Robespierre, Custine, St Just, and others of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Opposite André Chénier's window, as they still call it at the prison, are the grated bars behind which Louis Napoleon, and his faithful friends, Morny and Conneau, were put under lock and key. This courtyard is deeply interesting when we hear the illustrious names of those who have paced its stone flags unwillingly, and fain would we linger a little longer here; but the most interesting portion of the prison, Marie-Antoinette's cell, remains to be visited. Proceeding along another dimly-lighted passage, at the end of which is a large square opening and a dead wall, stand, on the left, two dirty yellow doors. One is condemned; the second closes with a ponderous lock. From his girdle our guide takes the self-same key as that used at the time of the imprisonment of Marie-Antoinette, and we are ushered into the last earthly dwelling-place of that unfortunate queen. The doorway is very low, and we are obliged to stoop in passing through. This was so arranged—we were told—in order to force the proud and royal head to bend before her persecutors. Tradition states that as the queen left her cell on her way to the scaffold in her sweeping robes, she failed to stoop low enough, and so struck her forehead against the top of the doorway as she passed out. Be it true or not, it is certainly accepted by the Austrian royal family; for at the time of Princess Christine's passage through Paris on her way to San Sebastian to meet her royal fiancé, the young Princess and her mother the Archduchess of Austria went to the cell of their illustrious ancestress and knelt before the marble monument erected by Louis XVIII. to the royal lady's memory; and the young Princess, ere quitting the cell, stooped and reverently kissed the spot where a few of Marie-Antoinette's gray hairs are said to have been found sticking on the blood-stain left by the blow. The cell, after the Restoration in 1816, was transformed into a small chapel. It is paved with dark-red bricks of a corrugated pattern, the same as existed in 1793. The white marble monument before mentioned, on the left of

the entrance, is surmounted by an urn with a Latin inscription, stating that in this cell Marie-Antoinette-Josèphe-Jeanne d'Autriche, wife of Louis XVI., was confined for seventy-six days before her execution. On an altar stand a crucifix and two candlesticks. The crucifix still occupies the position it did in the hapless queen's day, and no doubt many a time was fervently embraced by her in her hour of fearful trial. A lamp is also suspended from the ceiling.

There are in this cell two paintings, one by Drolling, representing the queen partaking her last sacrament; the other representing her removal from the Temple to the Conciergerie. The queen's furniture at that epoch consisted of a wooden table, a straw-chair, and a trundle bedstead placed against one of the walls. The last-named has since been removed.

A second cell, supposed to have been Marie-Antoinette's oratory, contains a portrait of the unfortunate queen. In the recess of the window in this cell, out of reach of the vandals, is an old-fashioned armchair, the favourite seat of the queen at the Tuileries. It was sent to the prison by Louis XVIII., to be kept there as a relic. It is in the Louis XVI. style, covered with silk, but so faded as to be almost colourless. From this cell we enter the chapel, furnished with rows of wooden pews, and a marble altar like a sarcophagus surmounted by brass candelabra. This chapel is interesting from its associations with the massacre of the Girondists on the 2d of September 1792. The small doorway through which the victims walked out, one after the other, and were foully murdered outside, still exists in the chapel. On the walls at either side may still be seen the remains of the autographs, now almost entirely effaced, traced by the hands of the brave and ill-fated victims when in here on the eve of their execution. Mass used to be said here; and at the far end, above the stone archways, may still be seen the places where the female prisoners attended divine worship. A wonderfully realistic painting, by Müller, of this chapel with prisoners huddled together, used to hang in the Museum of the Luxembourg, entitled 'Last Days of the Reign of Terror.'

At the present time, prisoners are now only kept at the Conciergerie who are awaiting trial. The prisoners are on the spot for their lawyers' visit. After trial, if they be found guilty, they are transferred to different penitentiaries, such as La Roquette, Mazas, &c. A few are brought in the morning, and reinstated in their various places of seclusion in the evening, when awaiting their trial. Sometimes they are brought for days in succession, for they never know the exact time they will be tried. They arrive in what the Parisians strangely call the *Panier à Salade*, better known amongst us as the 'Black Maria,' a closed vehicle, with a series of compartments for one person on each side, with room in the middle for a soldier to keep watch.

The Conciergerie contains about sixty-three cells, constructed in 1864. They are built on a concrete foundation, facing the large windows that look out upon the river Seine, and are said to be among the finest in Europe. They are occupied by prisoners awaiting their trial at the courts, which are held in another part of the building. During our visit, the notorious murderer Fran-

zani was confined there. Our guide informed us that during his time he had had many noted and distinguished prisoners under his charge, including, among others, Orsini and, as we have said, the late Emperor Napoleon; whilst his reminiscences were both many and varied.

MIN:

A RAILROAD STORY OF THE FAR WEST.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Macpherson entered the great palace car, all was still as death, save for the swaying of the car, as with increasing velocity it was hauled after the huge locomotive. All the curtains of the sleeping berths were closely drawn, and even the darkey porter was snoring away the hours, seated snugly in a reclining chair. Arthur approached the sleeping man of colour, and by means of a powerful shaking managed to awake the woolly-headed fellow, who started up, vaguely imagining that he had at last fallen into the hands of Western train-robbers.

'Now, don't make a fuss, my lad. If you had kept awake and attended to your business, you would have seen that I got aboard at a regular station. I am one of the agents of this Company, and I have business with the Superintendent. Is he aboard?'

'Ye-ye-yes, sah,' tremblingly replied the half-aroused porter.

'Well, you get him up as quickly as you can. Tell him the 44-mile operator is on the train with an important message.'

Two minutes later, Superintendent Ferris, without coat, collar, or shoes, stood beside Macpherson, whom he eyed closely, much as he had done in his Chicago office more than a year before. It was the first time the two men had met since, for the official had never redeemed his promise to visit 44-mile. Beyond this scrutinising glance, there was nothing strange in the greeting of the Superintendent, who was cool and collected, as became a Western railroad magnate.

'You have a message for me?'

'Yes, sir. Not directly either—but read that.' As he spoke, Arthur handed the official his translation of the last cipher message.

'Very good. Make yourself comfortable. We will see what comes of this.—By the way, where are we now?'

'We are, I should judge,' said Arthur, 'about ten miles west of my place, and about twenty-five miles east of Prairie City, the next station.'

The official proceeded to complete his toilet, and then lit a cigar, which he smoked in silence.

Seven or eight minutes passed, when suddenly Macpherson crossed the car to where the Superintendent sat. 'You know of Ripley, sir—the man who is on the engine?'

'I have heard of him.'

'Well, we are slowing. Perhaps you have hardly noticed it yet. There is no station, no

telegraph cabin or any water-tank near here; neither is there any level crossing or up-grade. I have good reason for suspecting that the mischief will come in right here, though just what shape it will take I cannot even guess. The boys on the road understand you to be a fearless man: if that is so, follow me. Have you got a revolver—and loaded?

'Yes.'

'That's good; you may need it.—Are you a dead-shot?'

'No.'

'Then give me the revolver. For a short time, try to forget that you are managing this road, and obey my orders.'

Macpherson took the official's pistol, and led the way through the train until they stood upon the front platform of the forward coach—the baggage car.

'I suppose,' said Arthur, 'you are willing that we should at all hazards preserve this train from destruction and get her through in safety?'

'Of course.'

'Then climb on to the locomotive with me and be prepared for anything.'

The train was now running at a rate of not more than fifteen miles an hour, so that the two men managed to raise themselves on to the tender of the locomotive with comparative ease. As they crawled over the stacks of firewood, both master and man took in the situation at a glance. The engineer was at that instant turning on a full head of steam; the fireman was closing the door of the furnace which he had just filled up with coal. Both were preparing to desert the engine!

As the two men lay stretched on the top of the tender, Macpherson motioned the Superintendent to keep very still. The fireman made a move to get down from the left-hand side of the engine. 'Come!' shouted Arthur; and quick as a flash rushed for the fireman, helping that individual to the track by a heavy blow. Almost in the same instant he turned to the engineer, who, though not so far advanced in his movements as the fireman, was preparing to descend the steps on the right-hand side of the engine. Placing the revolver close to the renegade engineer's ear, he shouted: 'Get back there and do your work! Attend to anything beside your business, even for a moment, and I'll fire!—Furthermore, if this train is not at Prairie City in time, I will see that we have a tarring and feathering exhibition in the station yard.—You need not take your hand off the lever, for I have brought you a fireman—the Superintendent. He will be stoker, while I watch you!'

The engineer was completely cowed. The train, with half-a-dozen valuable lives, was saved from a fearful destruction, and the special, drawn by locomotive No. 404, rolled into Prairie City on schedule time.

It is almost needless to remark that Sam Ripley was discharged at Prairie City, where the Superintendent decided to stay until another crew could come and take the engine. It is almost unnecessary to state that Arthur Macpherson, for his prompt action and personal bravery, received the hearty thanks, not only of Superintendent Ferris, but of the five or six directors who were passengers on the special—among them being the pompous

President of the C. R. M. & P. Of course these important personages immediately thought of cancelling their indebtedness to Arthur by bestowing upon him some sort of a reward. Naturally, promotion for the plucky and faithful agent seemed the easiest and most satisfactory *quid pro quo* with which to balance the account. So the President of the Company very graciously informed Arthur that they were on their way West to try and adjust the difficulty with their engineers, but instructions would be given Mr Ferris to stop at 44-mile on his return trip, when the Superintendent would be authorised to make Mr Macpherson an offer of something better in the way of a position on the C. R. M. & P.

It was in October that Arthur Macpherson saved the special from the destruction planned for it by Sam Ripley and his confederates. Now a year had passed away, and Mac was still at 44-mile; but how changed the place seemed to him! What an unsatisfactory period of time his second year had been, as compared with the first! True, his duties were not more arduous, and, true enough, when the directors learned that he preferred 44-mile to promotion, they agreed that his salary must be substantially advanced—and it was. He still had his office and his 'furnished room,' and there at a little distance was the tiny cottage he had built for Min. But Min?

There was where the difference lay, and what a difference! No, she was not dead; sometimes Arthur almost wished the girl *had* died, for then he would have had her still near him. At least he would have had her grave to tend and care for, and he would have had the satisfaction of knowing that if she had not been his, in the fullest sense of the word, she was no other's. As it was, he knew nothing certainly, except that Min was a thousand miles away—a surprisingly beautiful girl in a great city. Yes, he knew one other thing as certainly as he knew of his own existence: he knew that he loved Min Rossiter—not as a father or as a brother or as a friend, but with all the ardent, whole-souled affection that comes to men and women but once in a lifetime. Arthur began to suspect as much the first quiet hour he spent after the incident on the locomotive, when he thought upon the thrill that ran through him as the girl put her arm around his neck and kissed him. A week later, he knew it all; for, a week later, Min was gone.

As the President promised, the Superintendent had stopped at 44-mile on his way East, to talk with Arthur. Mr Ferris was much impressed with the girl—as, indeed, most men were who met her afterwards—and became especially interested after learning her history. With Arthur the official could do nothing, as Mac was bent upon staying at the quiet station on the plains. But when he offered Min a place in his own important office in Chicago as his private telegraph operator, with a salary far exceeding that paid to Arthur; and when he supplemented the financial inducement by picturing to the girl in glowing language the exciting social life of the gay and luxurious Western city, with the promise to assist her to the personal acquaintance of many influential ladies in the world of society—Min succumbed. She was only a girl, and, girl-like, she wanted to see the world. So she went.

Do not think, reader, that Min was ungrateful. Many a sharp twinge of regret did she experience on Arthur's account, and more than once she came near telegraphing Mr Ferris that she had changed her mind. But then she could not look at both sides of the question, and, ignorant of Arthur's unselfish affection for her, she thought that it would be positively wrong to refuse so exceptional a chance of making herself independent. She had no relatives, and really had no claim on Arthur; she ought to be at work in the world, with thoughts for the future. So she reasoned, and Arthur could not do otherwise than uphold her reasoning.

Why not? Why could he not have told her of his love and ask her to be his wife? Well, he might have done that; but such is not the manner of men like Arthur Macpherson. To him such a course would have seemed like taking advantage of the girl's isolated position and her ignorance of the world and its ways. No; he would let her go: he would let her mingle with all sorts and conditions of men: he would let her have all the opportunity possible of seeing the various combinations in the kaleidoscope of life: she should be admired by other men, and—if it must come to that—she should be loved by other men. At present, Arthur was far from certain that Min cared for him with a feeling deeper than gratitude; indeed, he was rather doubtful whether the girl knew the real meaning of love. If she did understand it, and if she did experience it—for him—then Mac thought he knew Min well enough to feel quite safe as to the ultimate issue. And if, after all the tinsel and glare of life in Chicago, he should discover that Min's love was for him alone, then he would join his love with hers, and consider the honours and emoluments of the world well lost for the one prize desired by him.

So Arthur helped her to start—helped her in many ways—with his advice and with his purse. For Min's wardrobe was considerably augmented after a day which she spent in the rather heterogeneous stores of New Constantinople, at Arthur's positive command; and if the girl was not ultra-fashionably dressed when she started away on the Atlantic Express, she appeared far from unbecoming in the outfit which Arthur's thoughtfulness had procured for her. It was two o'clock in the morning when Min boarded the train at the lonely little 44-mile depot; and if her eyes were very red from crying when the express stopped at breakfast-time, I think that something very like a tear trickled down Arthur Macpherson's sunburnt face as, for the first time for more than a year, he made coffee for *one*.

The months passed away, and Arthur became more accustomed to his lonely life, though always there remained the aching void, the incessant longing for the girl who was all he cared for in the world. True, he got many letters from Min; long letters, filled with glowing accounts of her successes, socially and in business. He learned by them that Mr Ferris was very kind and attentive, and that everything possible had been done by him to make Min feel comfortable amid her new surroundings. He had found her a home with a widow and her daughter, and many ladies of his acquaintance had called upon her. Altogether, Arthur came to the conclusion that Min

was really having what she called 'a good time.' Once, one of the conductors, who frequently passed through 44-mile, told Arthur that he had recently visited Chicago, where he saw Min and heard a good deal about her. This man told Macpherson rumour had it that the Superintendent was 'sweet' on his telegraph operator, and was going to marry her. This was not good news for Arthur. Such news is not pleasant for any man to hear. Men with love of a most utterly hopeless nature will feel a keen pang when they learn that the object of their love is to marry another. So Arthur suffered acutely when the conductor told him of the rumour that had come to his ears. It seemed more than a rumour when, a few weeks later, Superintendent Ferris himself made his appearance at 44-mile and plied Arthur with a number of questions relating to Min; and, although the Superintendent did not tell Arthur his object in so many words, a man of less perception and with not half so much interest in the matter could have read Robert Ferris's motives.

When the official had gone, Arthur attempted to reason himself into looking at the matter philosophically. 'Whatever is, is best,' he said, and tried to stop there; but he could not. 'It's hard though, very hard. I did all that a man could do for *him*. I gave him more than fortune, or even life itself. I gave him my name and my reputation, with all my chances in life—which were as good as, ay, better than his. Yet he is not satisfied. He has to come to my lonely hiding-place out here in the wilderness and steal away my one treasure. It's hard! And yet—even now I might—No; never!' And again his thoughts would revert to the girl herself, and he would wonder much that she had not taken him into her confidence on so important a matter as her possible marriage. Poor Arthur!

And Min? Amid all her surroundings, her thoughts continually sped westward to the little station on the plains and her old friend Arthur. She was but a girl, and a young girl at that, and naturally enough she thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of city life. Being a healthy girl, with warm youthful blood coursing through her veins, she entered with zest into all the entertainment and amusement which came in her way. She liked to dance, and she liked to attend the theatre; she liked pleasant company, and she liked to be admired; she liked to remember that she was young and pretty, and she liked to know that others cared to think well of her. But these superficial 'likes' did not represent the innermost feelings of Min's soul. It was not in her nature to forget the man who had stood her in such good stead when she had no other friend in the world. Nay, more than that; Min had discovered, as well as Arthur, that when the strain was laid upon the cord which bound them together, there was a hidden strength which it was utterly impossible to snap. The comparisons which the girl made between Macpherson and all the men, great and small, she met in Chicago were invariably in Arthur's favour; and after an entire year of absence, she found that she still cared more for Arthur Macpherson than for any man she had yet seen. In the summer-time she had tried to arrange for leave of absence, so that she might visit 44-mile; but Mr Ferris had persuaded

her to put off her vacation, on the score of pressing business; so October had come, and she was still at her daily duty in the Superintendent's office.

THE ANIMAL ALKALOIDS.

THE alkaloids are substances which occupy a very important place in the chemistry of life. When absorbed into the animal system, they act most powerfully upon it, some of them being among the direst poisons known to us, while others are invaluable medicines. In order to give the reader a general idea of their nature, it is only necessary to refer to a few typical examples of the class. Take, for instance, nicotine, one of the most poisonous of the alkaloids: this substance is the active principle of the tobacco plant, and is familiar to every smoker, if not by name, at least physiologically; for it is the cause not only of the soothing effects of smoking on the system, but also of the sickness which supervenes upon over-indulgence in the pipe. Strychnine and curarine are also good examples of the more poisonous of the alkaloids. The former is principally derived from the seeds of a plant called *Strychnos Ignatus*, or St Ignatius' bean; while the latter is the poison which gives their deadly character to the arrows used by the natives of certain tropical countries. On the other hand, however, there are included among this class of substances some of the most valuable medicines we possess in these times, such as quinine, which is extracted from the bark of certain species of trees called the Cinchonas; and morphine, one of the alkaloids of opium.

It will be observed that all the substances instanced above are of vegetal origin. Indeed, until very recently, it was thought that plants were the sole agents in the manufacture of alkaloids. Substances of a character very similar were, it is true, frequently detected in animal matter; but their presence there was in the eyes of most people satisfactorily explained by the supposition that they got into the system from without, through the consumption of vegetable matter, or otherwise. Strong arguments in favour of a different explanation might easily have been obtained; for cases of poisoning from animal food in which the symptoms were exceedingly like those which customarily followed overdoses of the known alkaloids, were of by no means rare occurrence. But no regular experiments were undertaken to find out the true cause of the phenomena observed in such cases; and until very recently it does not seem to have been suspected that alkaloids might be elaborated in the tissues of the animal body as well as in those of plants.

The first person who boldly hazarded the hypothesis that substances belonging to the same chemical genus as the vegeto-alkaloids could be elaborated in animal matter was Armand Gautier, a Frenchman. This scientist—who has earned for himself a world-wide reputation for his researches on this subject—about the year 1870 made some interesting observations, which led him to suspect that alkaloids were invariably elaborated during the course of putrefaction of albuminoid matter. Now, by far the greater part of the solid matter of which the animal body is made up consists of

albuminous substances; so that it did not require much straining of argument to show that it was extremely probable that alkaloids would also be formed in decaying animal matter. This probability seems to have at once attracted Gautier's attention; for he soon carried on a series of experiments on fibrin of the blood—that is to say, the albuminous substance which separates from the blood after it has left the body in consequence of the putrefaction, which in such circumstances it quickly undergoes; and from this fibrin, about 1872, he succeeded in obtaining various complex alkaloidal extractives. Thus was his grand hypothesis proved by facts; and the new substances which he discovered were called *ptomaines*, a name clearly indicative of their origin, for it is derived from the Greek word signifying a corpse.

About this same period, Professor Selmi, the famous Italian toxicologist, was engaged in independent researches, which led to a result exactly similar to that obtained by Gautier. This is shown by the communication which Selmi made to the Academy of Science of Bologna early in 1872, the main conclusion of which was, that in the bodies of persons who had died from natural causes were to be found substances which when tested chemically gave evidence of being closely allied to the alkaloids extractible from plants. When it became known that both Gautier and Selmi had arrived at precisely similar results by totally different methods—for the one approached the subject chemically, whereas the other came to his conclusions in consequence of observations made for legal purposes on bodies suspected to have been poisoned—the greatest interest was excited in the scientific world; and this interest was much increased when, shortly after, it was seen that these discoveries would play a most important part in criminal investigations. Selmi himself was engaged in one of the first cases where the question came up. The prosecution had endeavoured to make out that the cause of death was strychnia, one of the vegetable alkaloids; but Selmi, who was called on behalf of the suspected persons, pointed out conclusively that there were certain important differences between strychnia and the poison under examination, and gave his opinion that the compound found was a *ptomaine*. It can easily be seen that if the two kinds of alkaloids are so similar in constitution, it must be very difficult to ascertain which species is actually present in any case, and that much might hang upon the degree of care with which the tests were applied. Many attempts, consequently, were made to discover means whereby the animal and vegetable alkaloids might be distinguished from one another. At one time, it was thought that the requisite tests had been discovered; but the most recent researches seem to show that the chemical constitution of both classes is very similar, and that some at least of the *ptomaines* are identical with the vegetal alkaloids. For example, muscarine, an alkaloid formerly thought to be only derivable from certain poisonous mushrooms, has been discovered by Brieger to be a product of the decomposition of fish, and has even been artificially prepared from other chemical substances.

The origin of these *ptomaines* seems now to be clearly explained. That they arise from

albuminoid material in a state of putrefaction is undoubted, seeing that they have been artificially produced from it. One of Gautier's great scientific triumphs was the separation of various *ptomaines* from pure albumen, which he had allowed to undergo putrefaction free from atmospheric contact, so that there could be no suspicion of their coming from without. But that it would be wrong to assert that putrefaction was the sole means whereby the animal alkaloids were created, was soon to be made evident. With this new departure the name of Gautier is again associated; and it is due to the experiments which this veteran observer undertook between the years 1882 and 1886 that we are now in a position to affirm that it is not only in dead animal matter that cadaveric alkaloids are developed, but that they are also regularly elaborated in healthy tissues in which there is no trace of putrefaction, the vital processes being of themselves quite sufficient to cause their formation.

Suspecting that the poisonous nature of the bites of snakes and other animals was due to alkaloids, Gautier made various experiments in order to come to some conclusion on the subject. One of the most important of these consisted in the extraction from the fangs of the cobra di capello of various substances, which, when injected into mice and birds, even in very minute doses, caused death, preceded by symptoms very similar to those resulting from bites by that species of snake. Finding his suspicions so far correct, he next turned his attention to the human body, and in the course of various experiments on healthy muscular tissue he succeeded in obtaining five new alkaloids. To these newly discovered *vital* alkaloids, as we might term them, he gave the name of *leucomaines*, a word formed from the Greek for albumen, their connection with this latter substance being now firmly established. It only remains in this connection to add, that the varieties of both *ptomaines* and *leucomaines* which have been already discovered are many; but there is here a wide field for further research, not only with a view to finding new alkaloids, but to classifying and fixing upon the chemical constituents of those already detected.

To the importance of these recent discoveries in a legal sense, reference has already been made. From a medical point of view, however, they are likely to be more important still. It is not difficult to understand that there is here a subject the branches of which may be made, without the exercise of much imagination, to extend to almost every corner of pathology. We know as a matter of fact that the other natural waste products of the body, such as urea, carbonic acid, &c., when accumulated in excess in the system cause marked types of disease. Now, if that is so with respect to these substances, surely products of, in general, so poisonous and intricate a character as the *ptomaines* and *leucomaines* must also exercise a most appreciable effect on the system; and if not regularly and constantly eliminated, must undoubtedly cause ill-health. It is a familiar fact that persons constantly fall into states of ill-health which are extremely difficult to cure, and the real cause of which doctors cannot clearly explain. When, however, the symptoms accompanying many of these cases are considered, there is to be seen a wonderful likeness to those

following upon alkaloidal poisoning. The subject is still new, and it would be hazardous to prophesy too much at present with respect to the next advance; but of this we may be certain, that when the influence which these substances exert on the system becomes better known, a complete reform in the medical treatment of many diseases may be anticipated.

THE STORY OF A CRYPTOGRAM.

MR and Mrs RONAYNE were generally considered by their friends and acquaintances to be an exceptionally happy and fortunate couple. They had a pretty house at Chiswick, got up in the latest æsthetic-fashionable style. Mrs Ronayne drove out daily either in her neat victoria or neater brougham, drawn by the most spanking pair of chestnuts that ever came out of Tattersall's. Mr Ronayne was known to be 'something in the City,' though what the 'something' was no one knew precisely; but the resulting income must be, every one argued, considerable. No small economies were apparent in their ménage, even to the eyes of the most critical and prying of spinster ladies. Mrs Ronayne had her gowns made at the best of West End 'houses,' and her bonnets and other accessories of attire were quite beyond reproach. As for Ronayne himself, Poole and Smalpage tailored for him, Hoby shod him, and Lincoln and Bennett covered his slightly bald cranium with the most immaculate and glossy of silk hats.

The little dinners given by this fortunate pair were quite epicurean in their way. Though limited as to the number of guests—for it was seldom that more than ten or twelve sat down to the Ronaynes' exquisitely decked table—the hostess was noted for her skill in getting pleasant people together, and therefore her invitations were rarely, if ever, declined, and her guests were never bored. All the married folks of their acquaintance quoted them to each other as a realised ideal of matrimonial felicity.

'Oh Arthur, if you treated me with half the deference and affection with which Mr Ronayne treats his wife,' said Mrs Fitzsharp to her mild-faced lord and master, 'what a happy woman I should be!'

'My dear Mathilda, can't you get a gown to fit you as Mrs Ronayne's fit her? But I suppose it's not the fault of your gowns, after all; it's the dowdy woman inside them,' snarled Mr Brown to his patient spouse, whose only answer was a weary sigh. 'Ronayne is a lucky fellow.'

And so the Fitzsharps and the Browns thought themselves very much to be pitied, while their more fortunate neighbours were to be envied, admired—and lauded.

Everybody was civil, nay, more than civil, to the Ronaynes. Mrs Ronayne's gowns and bonnets were copied by all the maids and matrons in Linden Park; her drawing-room was always full to overflowing on her 'At Home' days, and compliments and pretty speeches floated like incense on the air whenever she put her daintily-shod foot inside her neighbours' doors.

The fortunate Mrs Ronayne lacked nothing; her two children were as pretty and picturesque

as any to be seen portrayed in all the glory of golden hair, plush, and well-turned legs on the walls of Burlington House. Just as a rose looks best with an unfolded bud or two near it, so a pretty woman never looks more charming than when a flower-faced child or two hangs about her. Mrs Ronayne knew this, and 'darling Evie' and 'darling Robbie' were generally to be seen in the drawing-room on her Thursday afternoons, or in the carriage when she drove in the Park. Was there any locked cupboard holding its grinning, bony inmate in that gorgeously furnished suburban villa? Was there one little rift in the lute that made music for the Ronaynes? one crumpled leaf in their couch of roses? one black coarse thread in the cloth-of-gold web of their lives? Let us peep, like Asmodeus, under the Ronaynes' roof and see.

The breakfast hour at Honeywood Villa was nine o'clock, rather an early hour for Londoners, but Mr Ronayne liked to get down to his office by half-past ten, and Mrs Ronayne liked to preside over her husband's matutinal repast, pouring out his coffee with her own fair hands, and casting a solicitous, not to say curious, glance at him as he looked over his correspondence. Indeed, so anxious was she that her lord should lack none of the *petits soins* which were his due, that she always entered the breakfast-room at least a quarter of an hour before him, and cast a house-wifely regard over the table, to see that everything was arranged in accordance with his somewhat fastidious taste. At the same time, and for her own satisfaction, she was in the habit of scrutinising pretty closely the covers of all Mr Ronayne's letters.

One bright spring morning Mrs Ronayne emerged fresh and fair as Aurora's self from her chamber, and descending the stairs rather more quickly than usual, entered the cosy little breakfast-room, and went straight to the table where Mr Ronayne's extensive correspondence was spread out imposingly. Running the array of letters over rapidly, she finally singled one out. 'At last!' she said, her colour deepening and her fine eyes growing bigger and brighter as she fixed them indignantly on the address of the letter. 'Post-mark, London, W., and the same handwriting. I should know those *ps* and *ys* anywhere. I will find out who is the writer!' And she slipped the letter in question into the pocket of her artistic morning-gown; and then, as she caught the sound of her husband's footsteps crossing the hall, she turned nonchalantly towards the window and bent over a *jardinière* of white and pink primulas that were putting forth their delicate blossoms to enjoy the morning sunshine.

Mr Ronayne sauntered into the room and went at once to look at his letters. A slight shade of disappointment crossed his face as he shuffled them about like a pack of cards, and he uttered an impatient exclamation.

'What is the matter, dear?' said his wife sweetly. 'Has anything gone wrong?'

'A letter which I expected hasn't come, that's all,' replied Mr Ronayne in a tone of vexation.

'Perhaps it will come by the next post. Was it a very important letter—a business letter?' inquired Mrs Ronayne, looking her husband full in the face.

'Well, yes—it would be rather an important letter—at least it might be.'

'I wonder how much of that is true?' thought his wife. Aloud she said: 'I am so sorry, Dolph.—But eat your breakfast; here are some of the *rogmons sautés* you like so much.'

But that morning Mr Ronayne had no appetite; he trifled for a few minutes with his knife and fork, then gulped down his coffee, opened and read some of his letters, none of which seemed to give him any satisfaction, glanced hastily at the *Times*, and finally went off to the City without bestowing upon his wife a single caress, or uttering one of those endearing epithets the constant and public use of which had won for the Ronaynes the reputation of being 'such a happy pair.'

When her Adolphus had taken his departure, Mrs Ronayne ran up to her boudoir, locked the door, and took the purloined letter out of her pocket. 'It's a woman's handwriting—I know it is,' she said to herself as she held it between her trembling fingers. 'Now, I should like to know what business my husband has to receive letters from any woman but his wife.' She turned the offending missive over and looked at the back. It was not sealed, only secured in the ordinary manner. Nothing could be easier than to open it in such a way that none could suspect that it had been tampered with. Running down-stairs, she re-entered the breakfast-room and held the letter to the steam of the kettle, which still stood on the brass trivet beside the fire. In five minutes the envelope had been forced to yield its secret, and Mrs Ronayne was free to indulge her curiosity. With a quickly beating heart she unfolded the single sheet of note-paper the envelope contained, ran her eyes over it, then read word by word what follows:

'3 cannot you realise 10 road run ground mile quarter scarlet runner police and shares 5 in the ambush fine †††† 7 condition so will come enforced sound mine 13 break from my heart to years ago thoroughly prepared so doubtless unavailing fall 20 makes me indeed scattered exception to multitudes little solitude puffs to have spent seven in all ivory remember please impending.'

That was all. There was neither date nor signature to the letter. Mrs Ronayne read it over at least a dozen times, and her delicately pencilled brows drew together in a puzzled frown. What on earth did it all mean? Was the letter a foolish hoax? Was it written by some inmate of Bedlam or Colney Hatch? Or, stay.—Yes; this surely explained the mystery. The letter was in cipher, a cryptogram of the Donnelly-Bacon-Shakespeare order.

'I'll find it out!' panted Mrs Ronayne fiercely.—'I'll find it out!—and then tax Adolphus with—with'—

As she had not yet settled in her own mind the precise nature of the crime of which her Adolphus had been guilty, Mrs Ronayne could not complete her sentence. All sorts of conjectures were floating in her excited brain. Perhaps it was on this account that although she spent the whole morning in puzzling over the purloined letter, the only thing she got out of it was a racking headache, which not even her favourite remedy, *sal-volatile*, could cure.

When Mr Ronayne came back from the City about five o'clock, he found his wife reclining gracefully on the sofa in her boudoir, looking pale and heavy-eyed.

'What's the matter, Julia?' he asked kindly. 'You seem seedy.'

'I've a horrid headache,' she answered crossly. —'You don't look particularly bright either,' she added, glancing at Mr Ronayne's puckered forehead and haggard eyes.

'Oh, I've been rather bothered to-day—about business. Nothing of much consequence.'

'Oh—is that all?' answered Mrs Ronayne with one of her quick suspicious glances. She had passed the afternoon shut up there in her room alone, and had worked herself into a perfect fever of doubt and surmise, and finally of jealousy, for jealousy was charming Mrs Ronayne's besetting weakness. It is no doubt very flattering to a man's vanity that his wife should think so highly of his personal attractions that she is in constant dread lest some other woman should fall a victim to them. But, on the other hand, it is a dreadful nuisance when one can't address half-a-dozen words to a pretty girl, or remark that Mrs So-and-So is a very agreeable woman, without enduring a subsequent *peine forte et dure* of reproaches and sneers—and tears.

Mrs Ronayne pored perseveringly over that, to her, nonsensical and unintelligible letter, and at length arrived at the conclusion that it was a cryptogramic love-letter. The handwriting was undoubtedly feminine, and why, argued Mrs Ronayne, should a woman write a letter in cipher to her husband unless she desired to hide something disgraceful.

Mrs Ronayne made up her mind to solve that wicked cryptogram or perish in the attempt. She resolved also to watch her husband carefully during the next few days. Now, Julia Ronayne, though quite clever enough to hold her own in the conventional small-talk conversation usual in her set, had never guessed a conundrum or solved an acrostic in her life. To puzzle out a cryptogram of the simplest nature was quite beyond her power. Baffled and angry, she was at last compelled to own herself nonplussed by the ingenuity of the woman who had written that horrid letter. She, however, resolved to carry out the other part of her plan of campaign—namely, to watch her husband.

Certainly, Adolphus was greatly changed since the eventful morning when she had possessed herself of that queer letter. Each day saw him looking more anxious and careworn and *dis-trait*.

'He must be very fond of that—that creature,' thought Mrs Ronayne angrily. And she hardened her heart against her husband. She felt that things were coming to a crisis of some sort. Adolphus was evidently depressed and wretched. He ate little and slept less; even the children's chatter failed to rouse him from his fits of gloom. At last the crash came. One evening he returned earlier than usual from the City and went straight up to his wife's boudoir. Mrs Ronayne saw at once that some catastrophe had befallen. Disaster was written on her husband's white, drawn face.

'Julia,' he said huskily—'Julia, my dear'—he took her hand and gazed wistfully into her face—'do you care very much for—for all this?' He

just indicated the luxurious furnishing of the room with a gesture of his left hand.

'What do you mean, Dolph?' asked Julia, startled out of her usual lazy indifference.

'I mean, dear, would it distress you very much to leave Honeywood Villa—and give up'—

'O Dolph, something has happened!' interrupted his wife with a scared look. 'Something has gone wrong in the City.'

Mr Ronayne smiled a wan tired smile. 'Yes, Julia,' he said quietly, 'something has gone wrong—very wrong. I am ruined for'—

'Ruined!' almost shrieked Mrs Ronayne. 'O Dolph, you have been speculating! Haven't I warned you a hundred times against that horrid Stock Exchange? Haven't I often begged you to devote all your energies to the business?'

'Don't cry "I told you so" at me now, Julia,' said Mr Ronayne wearily. 'It is so easy to be wise after the event. This speculation would have made a millionaire of me had it not been for a most unlucky *contretemps*.'

'Of course! That is always the case,' wailed his wife, hiding her face in her pocket-handkerchief and dissolving into tears.

'Come, come; don't cry, my dear,' said Mr Ronayne, who hated to see his wife cry, which was perhaps the reason why she did it so often. 'Things mayn't turn out so badly after all.—You didn't let me finish my sentence just now. I was going to say that I am ruined for the time being. But with a year or two of retrenchment and hard work, I shall pull through, I daresay. What troubles me most is that I must deprive you of so much that I know you care for—your pretty house, your carriage—and unlimited credit at Madame Eulalie's,' he added with a smile.

'How did it happen? Tell me all about it,' said Mrs Ronayne, drying her eyes. Curiosity put grief to flight. She looked up at him with the tears hanging on her lashes and her rosy lips parted eagerly. She had never looked prettier. 'Was it this tiresome business that has made you look so anxious lately?' she added quickly.

'Yes; you see, all this trouble might have been averted had it not been that an important letter miscarried.'

Mrs Ronayne's heart stood still for an instant and then beat furiously. 'An important letter—miscarried,' she repeated in a dazed tone.

'Yes; it was like this. You remember the Thurstons? Well, Thurston and I invested largely in Fourcross Mine shares last year. It's a long story, and I know you don't like business details, so I'll cut it as short as I can. The Fourcross Mine is in South America, and Thurston went over a couple of months ago to see whether the thing was *bonâ fide* or not—whether the shares were worth sticking to, or only good for speculation.—You know the sort of woman Mrs Thurston is?'

'O yes; a dreadful dowdy, and wears spectacles,' interpolated Julia contemptuously.

'A shrewd woman of business though—Thurston's right hand. It was arranged that Mrs Thurston should communicate to me the result of her husband's investigations, which he sent to her by cable in cipher. I daresay you can guess why I did not wish him to communicate with me direct: it was imperative that my connection with him should be kept secret. Unluckily, a

few weeks ago scarlet fever broke out among the Thurston children, and I would not go to the house for fear of bringing the infection here; therefore, Mrs Thurston agreed to write to me in a cipher of a very simple kind, but which would not be intelligible to every one in case any of the letters were tampered with.'—

'O Dolph, will you ever forgive me?' burst out Mrs Ronayne suddenly, throwing herself on her husband's breast. 'It was I who stole the letter—it is I who have ruined you!'

'You!' cried Mr Ronayne incredulously.

Julia drew back with a pale frightened face; she dared not meet her husband's eyes. Then she rose mechanically, unlocked her *escritoire*, and took from it the letter, which she tremblingly put into his hand.

'There it is, Dolph,' she said in a low voice.

He took the letter, opened and read it in silence. 'How did you get it?' he said at last, fixing his eyes sternly on his wife's tear-stained face. 'Julia, I can scarcely believe that even you could be such a fool as to have intercepted this letter.'

'I did. But, O Dolph! it was in a woman's handwritng—and I thought—I thought'—

'It's that idiotic jealousy of yours, I suppose!' he interrupted. 'Look here! Will this convince you that Mrs Thurston hasn't written me a love-letter?' he added with grim irony. Then he held the letter towards her, and with a shaking forefinger, indicated first the numerals and then the corresponding words of the cryptogram. 'It's a very simple cipher. *Realise shares Fourcross Mine. Fall impending.* If I had received this letter a week ago, I should have sold the shares at a high figure, and realised a fortune. As it is they are little better than waste paper; if you look at this morning's Money Market you will see why. The Thurstons are all right; for I happened to hear to-day that Mrs Thurston—acting on the private information she had received—instructed her broker to sell a week ago—at the time when she wrote me this letter. But for your folly—or my anxiety about the children, if you like to put it that way—I should have been able to retire from business altogether. As it is, we must let this house for a few years, and live in lodgings as cheaply as we can.—It will be a hard trial for you, my poor girl; but I hope it will have cured you once and for always of your foolish and groundless jealousy.—And,' he added with a smile, 'perhaps in future you won't think it necessary to tamper with my letters.'

TEARS IN LITERATURE.

TEARS have played no unimportant part in literature, especially in high-flown novels and sentimental poems. For some considerable time it was the custom to make the characters weep copiously upon every possible occasion. Tears of joy, tears of grief, tears of anger, tears of indignation—tears, in short, whenever they could be dragged in, were with the writers of a past generation a standing rule; and in those days the character whose 'grief is too deep for tears' would have been regarded as a glaring anomaly, and as an absurd and impossible creation. Carlyle very truly observed that the eighteenth century was an age of 'shams and

windy sentimentalities;' but it must be noted that the great feature of the age was a reaction against false sentiment. This really set in during the latter half of the seventeenth century, at a period when *The Rehearsal* was produced to ridicule the extravagances of the 'heroic' plays of the Restoration. Other burlesques aimed at the same objects soon followed. Ten years before Fielding held up to ridicule 'the puny Cockney bookseller' who poured forth 'endless volumes of sentimental twaddle,' his *Tom Thumb* was produced; and in some notes which he added afterwards, he has transmitted to us many amusing examples of the stilted language of the plays then in vogue. In the first act of Fielding's burlesque, King Arthur says to Queen Dollallolla:

Ha! what wrinkled sorrow
Hangs, sits, lies, frowns upon thy knitted brow?
Whence flow those tears fast down thy blubber'd cheeks,
Like a swollen gutter, gushing through the streets?

In explanation of this, the author observes that floods of this character are very frequent in the tragic writers, and quotes these examples from plays of the period:

Near to some murmuring brook I'll lay me down,
Whose waters, if they should too shallow flow,
My tears shall swell them up till I will drown.

Pouring forth tears at such a lavish rate,
That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.

From another extract it would seem that the waters of grief may soon be changed to those of joy:

These tears, that sprung from tides of grief,
Are now augmented to a flood of joy.

The tears of another character drown the whole world:

Our swelling grief
Shall melt into a deluge, and the world
Shall drown in tears.

Sterne was, as everybody knows, an extensive dealer in tears, and his reference in *Tristram Shandy* to the tears of the recording angel is as well known as any passage in literature. Barham cleverly and characteristically parodied this in the *Lay of St Nicholas*:

The accusing Byers 'flew up to heaven's Chancery,'
Blushing like scarlet with shame and concern;
The archangel took down his tale, and in answer, he
Wept—(see the works of the late Mr Sterne).

Indeed, it is said, a less taking both were in
When, after a lapse of a great many years,
They took'd Uncle Toby five shillings for swearing,
And blotted the fine out again with their tears!

To compile an index to the references to tears in Sterne's works would be no slight task, because most of his characters were of what Mr Charles Jeames Yellowplush would call a 'mist constitution.' But to Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*—much of which is written after the manner of the author of *Tristram Shandy*—there has been appended an index to the tears shed in the course of the attractive story, and a very interesting compilation it is, showing conclusively that, as Professor Henry Morley has observed, it can scarcely be called a

'dry' book. The compiler of this odd contribution to the curiosities of literature, who is careful to state that chokings, &c., are not counted, gives no fewer than forty-seven references to tears in that short work. In one instance, it will be remembered, Mr Atkins' daughter falls to the ground and 'bathes' her father's feet with her tears; while there are also several references to 'showers' of tears. As Mackenzie afterwards assisted in writing tracts against the doctrines of the Revolutionists—of which this absurd sentiment, so freely indulged in by Rousseau and Sterne, was a serious reflection—we may take it that his opinions with regard to tears underwent a change.

In the writings of those great realists in English fiction, Fielding and Smollett, tears do not play a very important part, nor do Scott and other great novelists deal much in extravagant sentiment; but for many years there was plenty of high-falutin' in the productions of some of the lesser fry. The famous Minerva Press poured out stuff of this kind in great quantities, keeping a number of the customary phrases ready composed in type, to facilitate printing, as Sydney Smith said, because the proprietor of the Press well knew that such phrases must form a part of every story he printed. Macaulay, who could read anything, used to skim through many of these sentimental novels, a specimen of one of the catastrophes in which has been recorded by his biographer. Literature of this character must have inspired a clever little skit, entitled *The Tears of Sensibility*, which Macaulay wrote; but the people to whom it was sent took it in sober earnest!

Of more modern novelists, Lytton undoubtedly stands at the head of the sentimental school. Whether he deserves all Thackeray's satire is, however, another matter. Thackeray himself was by no means sparing in his use of tears. In the course of *Vanity Fair* there are a good many instances in which the 'green eyes' of Becky Sharp 'looked up to heaven and filled with tears;' and as to sentiment, Alexander Smith said that the only faculty with which the great novelist gifted his good women was the supreme faculty of tears. Without going so far as this, it must be confessed that Thackeray's women are, to use his own phrase, 'uncommonly watery,' although they do not shed 'showers' or 'rivers' of tears, like the heroines of a past generation.

Every novelist has some pet idea, just as every man has some pet word or phrase; and Dickens's pet resource for producing humour was tears, of which he avails himself largely. Nearly all his humbugs are gifted with the power of producing at least one tear at command; and in *Martin Chuzzlewit* he runs through the whole gamut of tears—the tears of grief, the tears of joy, the tears of sentimental drunkenness, the tears of indignation ("Indignation," observed Mr Pecksniff, "will bring the scalding tear into the honest eye, I know"—he wiped his own elaborately), and the tears of hypocrisy—although perhaps the tears of indignation should be included with the latter. Of his use of tears for producing humour, only two examples need be quoted. Bailey junior expressed his contrition on a memorable occasion by 'affecting to wipe away scalding tears with his apron, and afterwards feigned to wring a vast amount of water out of that garment.' Of a letter which he intended to write to his aunt, Dick Swiveller

said: 'I mean to blot it a good deal and shake some water over it out of the pepper-caster, to make it look penitent. "I'm in such a state of mind that I hardly know what I write"—blot—"if you could see me at this minute shedding tears for my past misconduct"—pepper-caster—"my hand trembles when I think"—blot again.—If that don't produce the effect, it's all over.' These are two instances out of many in which Dickens makes use of tears with inimitable effect, and with all the little embellishments of which he was such a master. Dickens's humbugs, with their unlimited power of shedding crocodile tears, have frequently evoked criticism; but in the course of a controversy that has recently taken place on the 'Anatomy of Acting,' it was stated that anybody with a week's practice can produce tears at will. If this be true, the 'hebdomadal conferrers of immortality' are indeed confounded.

Obviously, Dickens often meant to ridicule the idea that tears are indispensable adjuncts to true feeling; and no doubt much of his satire in this direction accomplished its purpose. What influence his writings alone had in moulding the character of the fiction of to-day it is impossible accurately to determine; but that influence was undoubtedly great, and the fashion in literature at present is certainly not the ultra-sentimental. Emphatically, then, tears 'have had their day.' We have now, it is true, the novel of sentiment, the novel of romance, and what Mr Justin McCarthy calls the 'conundrum sort' of novel; but we are all 'realists' so far as sentiment is concerned, and 'shams and sickly sentimentalities' are not at all likely to achieve any great popularity whilst the public taste remains as it is at present.

THEN AND NOW.

I.

Dost thou remember, love, how pale and wan
This lakelet ere the wintry days were gone,
With one green isle of glistening lily-leaves?

Dost thou remember, love, that starless night
When the winds ceased their sighing, in affright,
And birds were silent under cottage eaves?

Remembering, strive a moment, love, to guess
The woe of hearts unloved, their loneliness,
Their deathless pain no hour of rest relieves.

II.

How gleams the lake now in the summer light,
While drifting lilies, golden-hued and white,
Fling back a kindred splendour to the sun!

Ere that great darkness awed us into fear,
The silver moon soared slowly, full and clear,
To skies where night was ended, just begun.

So mayst thou know how gladly I saw afar
Thy own sweet face shine like a splendid star;
What peace closed round me when the prize was won.

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